

21 March 2007

Mrs Shirley Wellings  
The Headteacher  
Western Springs Primary School  
School Road  
Rugeley  
Staffordshire  
WS15 2PD

Dear Mrs Wellings

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WESTERN SPRINGS PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Robina Tomes, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 March 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including seven lessons, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority (LA), and subject and phase leaders.

### Context

The school was made subject to special measures in November 2006. After a period of turbulence at headteacher level, including absence for ill health, an acting headteacher was appointed less than a month before the inspection. The governors have now appointed the acting headteacher as the permanent head. She attended a school improvement seminar run by Ofsted in February

2007, accompanied by the chair of governors and LA adviser. The LA has appointed an additional governor from January 2007.

## Achievement and standards

Standards remain low but staff have responded to advice and are now usually planning lessons at a more appropriate level. Although, in some lessons, expectations are still too low and planning does not take into account previous poor progress to try and help pupils make up on lost ground. The school has introduced a clear system to track the progress of pupils and is well placed to monitor effectively how well pupils are doing relative to their targets, and to measure their progress over time. Staff are starting to use data more effectively to ensure work is better matched to pupils' ability, but this is inconsistent.

In the majority of lessons observed progress was at least satisfactory and occasionally good. When progress is weak pupils are not challenged and the work is not well matched to their ability, so that higher attaining pupils finish quickly and lower attaining pupils do not understand what is required.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- ensure teachers set suitably challenging tasks for pupils and increase the progress made in lessons – satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes are generally good. Pupils are courteous and eager to speak to visitors. They like their school and are supportive of their teachers. Attendance is broadly average. However, some pupils do not see the need to attend on time and arrive exactly at the start of the day or just after the bell is rung. Parents could help the school day get off to a more purposeful start by ensuring their children arrive before the bell.

Behaviour in lessons and the playground is generally good, with most pupils knowing right from wrong and clearly obeying the rules. At lunchtime pupils have a variety of resources to play with and they are eagerly anticipating the arrival of further equipment. The school council has been instrumental in choosing these. There are a few pupils who break the rules, for instance by play fighting and/or practising cartwheels, which are banned as they could cause injury. The fact that these issues are not always dealt with causes some resentment from other pupils. This is being addressed with training for midday supervisors and interviewing pupils to take on the role of playground buddies with agreed job descriptions. Pupils are also involved in raising funds for an adventure area.

Pupils report there are occasional instances of bullying but these are sorted out quickly by staff. There have been some exclusions this term, although most resulted from the same incident. The behaviour policy is being reviewed and updated.

Pupils say they are aware of how to be healthy and enjoy the range of clubs and after school activities that are available. Many take part in sporting activities and a group are keen to learn more about helping and understanding the environment. The breakfast club provides a healthy breakfast for pupils and is very much appreciated by those who attend before school.

### Quality of provision

The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now generally satisfactory, although it still is not good enough to overcome previous inadequacies and ensure pupils are achieving the standards expected from them. The headteacher and her deputy have a clear understanding of what improvements need to be made. While they are being implemented effectively, the improvements are currently still at a very early stage and not yet consistent throughout the school. Middle managers do not consistently take a sufficient lead in supporting the drive to improve the quality of teaching.

Pupils' attitudes to school are positive with most eager to learn. Pupils say that they enjoy school and they feel safe. Questions are now generally asked equally of boys and girls. In the best lessons open questions are used well to enhance understanding. In addition, keywords are used effectively to enhance literacy skills in other subjects, as seen in science lessons.

In most lessons staff make good use of positive behaviour strategies and reward pupils for good work and behaviour. Pupils take pride in receiving a reward and value it, whilst staff take the appropriate actions to stop any poor behaviour. Teaching assistants generally work well to support staff. Targets are clearly visible in classes but not all pupils have a good understanding of what they mean or how to improve.

Children in the Foundation Stage generally make good progress and follow a wide range of activities. However, the lack of easy access to an outdoor area significantly hinders progress in developing gross motor skills for the younger children.

The use of the interactive whiteboards has improved and many teachers use them in their lessons. However, some staff have not received sufficient training to use them effectively and the inability to use a conventional whiteboard means that opportunities to develop ideas and to record pupils' responses are missed.

Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and staff have received suitable training. Risk assessments have been carried out rigorously, with a number of issues identified to be followed up. Clear procedures are in place to ensure pupils' safety, including those for safe recruitment. The school has sent out a form for parents to give their permission for pupils to use the Internet and it now needs to follow up these requests to ensure all parents reply and the school has complete records.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- ensure that procedures for safeguarding pupils are implemented rigorously – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher set a clear agenda for improvement and have worked tirelessly to improve the quality of teaching and learning and hence raise standards. They have identified the school's main strengths and weaknesses and formulated an appropriate plan to rectify the issues raised in the inspection. They have put in appropriate policies and procedures but many of these are in the early stages of implementation and are inconsistent across the school. However, a great deal has been done in a short time and the foundations for improvement have been securely established. Opportunities for staff to visit other schools to observe good practice have been planned but, as yet, have not been able to take place.

Staff are responding to the leadership but subject and phase team leaders do not consistently support the drive for improvement or take a lead role in raising standards. In some areas leadership is weak and not effective enough to improve the quality of provision and increase the progress of pupils. Planning is not monitored sufficiently to ensure all pupils are challenged with the work.

Governance has improved and is now more effective in supporting the school and holding it to account. There are now appropriate structures and systems in place and the governing body now has to use these effectively to ensure the momentum for improvement within the school continues and grows.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- carry out rigorous monitoring of the school's performance to identify exactly where weaknesses lie. Draw up and implement plans to rectify the weaknesses – satisfactory
- improve the effectiveness of the governing body – satisfactory.

## External support

The local authority's statement of action is satisfactory. It provides a sound framework for further improvement, including suitable support from literacy and numeracy consultants and the LA attached adviser, who works well with the school and whose support has been very well received. The LA's commentary explains how the school's progress will be monitored and evaluated. A 'Strategic Core Group' has been set up to ensure all agreed improvement actions are undertaken effectively and to evaluate the impact of LA interventions. The LA has supported the governing body through additional training and has appointed an experienced governor. A Consultant Leader has been appointed to support the new headteacher and additional funding provided to purchase appropriate training and resources. The LA expects the school to be removed from special measures before November 2008.

## Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure subject and phase leadership consistently supports the school's drive to improve and is proactive in identifying how to get better.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children and Lifelong Learning for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith  
H M Inspector